

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 08470 141858Z

64

ACTION EA-13

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EUR-10 DPW-01 AID-10 RSR-01 /079 W

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R 141330Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2588

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

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LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJ: REPUBLICANS PREPARE TO MOVE FOR GREATER POWER

1. WITHIN TAM GROPING FOR A WAY OUT, SIRIK MATAK'S REPUBLICAN PARTY AS WELL AS THE DEMOCRATS IS MOVING TO EXPLOIT THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES. THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS, LON NOL'S MAIN POLITICAL SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE MILITARY, FIND THEMSELVES DEFENDING THE STATUS QUO.

2. ON AUGUST 9 REPUBLICAN PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL OP KIM ANG PROPOSED TO HIS SOCIO-REPUBLICAN COUNTER-PART HANG THUN HAK THAT THE TWO PARTIES FORM A WORKING ALLIANCE AND "FRONT". TWO DAYS LATER, HANG THUN HAK ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE, AND THE IDEA WAS PUT TO THE MARSHAL, WHO GAVE A GENERAL BLESSING. ACCORDING TO OP KIM ANG, HOWEVER, THE DETAILS REMAIN TO BE AGREED. IN PARTICULAR, THE REPUBLICANS WANT "TEAM WORK", WHICH IN PRACTICE SEEMS TO MEAN THAT EACH PARTY WOULD HAVE

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 08470 141858Z

A VETO ON THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER. HANG THUN HAK IS

NOW DISCUSSING THIS CONCEPT WITH HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE,
AND FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS ARE EXPECTED AT WEEK'S END.
IF SUCCESSFUL, THERE WILL BE A JOINT COMMUNIQUE
ANNOUNCING THE ALLIANCE.

3. AS OP KIM ANG TELLS ENDERS, THE BASIC IDEA IS TO BE ABLE TO REPLACE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WITH A NEW, "PRE-NEGOTIATED" GOVERNMENT, WHEN AND AS IN TAM FINALLY WITHDRAWS. THE REPUBLICANS MAY ALSO HAVE ANOTHER OBJECTIVE IN MIND: TO WEAN AWAY THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS FROM THEIR EXCLUSIVE ALLIANCE TO LON NOL AND THUS TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR THE ULTIMATE ASCENSION OF SIRIK MATAK TO POWER.

4. THE POSITION OF THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS IS LESS CLEAR. UNDER HANG THUN HAK'S LEADERSHIP THEY HAVE IN THE PAST PREACHED COOPERATION TO THE REPUBLICANS, AND ARE THUS IN SOME SENSE HOISTED BY THEIR OWN PETARD. THEY ARE QUITE AWARE THAT THEY LACK A LEADING PERSONALITY TO COMPETE WITH SIRIK FOR LON NOL'S SUCCESSION. AND THEY ARE ACUTELY SENSITIVE TO THE JEOPARDY TO THE COUNTRY SHOULD A FULL-FLEDGED POLITICAL CRISIS OCCUR. THUS WE FIND HANG THUN HAK READILY AGREEING TO OUR SUGGESTION TO INTERVENE TO GET IN TAM TO STAY ON, AND SUCH OTHER SOCIO-REPUBLICAN SENIORS AS SENATE PRESIDENT SAUKAM KHOY AND ASSEMBLY VICE PRESIDENT PAN SOTHI HAVE SOUGHT US OUT TO URGE AN AMERICAN EFFORT TO KEEP THE PRESENT CONFIGURATION IN PLACE.

5. TO BOTH GROUPS WE HAVE MADE QUITE PLAIN THAT NOW IS NOT THE MOMENT FOR CHANGE. WHILE THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS RESPONDE ENTHUSIASTICALLY, OP KIM ANG'S ANSWER IF "YES, YES, YES BUT YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN IN TAM AND SOSTHENE TO HAVE A WORKING GOVERNMENT." WE WILL FOLLOW UP WITH ANOTHER MEETING WITH ANG EARLY NEXT WEEK.

6. AS OF THE MOMENT, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THIS PARTY MANEUVERING WILL BE THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT. THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 08470 141858Z

REPUBLICANS HAVE A LOT OF SCORES TO SETTLE BETWEEN THEM, FULL AGREEMENT THIS WEEK ON A "FRONT" SEEMS UNLIKELY, AND EVEN WHEN IT COMES WILL NOT IN ITSELF PROVOKE A CHANGE. HOWEVER, THE REPUBLICAN THRUST IS A FURTHER DESTABILIZING ELEMENT, CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASE THE PROBABILITY OF SOME CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT IN THE WEEKS AHEAD.

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